



Saguaro National Park News Release

For Immediate Release

July 4, 2013

Contact: Estee Rivera (520) 733 8613 or Esther_Rivera@nps.gov

or Andy L. Fisher (520) 733-5139 or Andy_L_Fisher@nps.gov

13- 36

NATURALIZATION CEREMONY HELD AT SAGUARO NATIONAL PARK *Embrace Citizenship – Experience America Through Your National Parks*

Tucson, AZ – Twenty people from 10 countries became United States citizens in ceremonies held on the Fourth of July at Saguaro National Park, Tucson Mountain District. The ceremonies were held in partnership with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

U.S. District Court Judge Leslie A. Bowman presided over the naturalization ceremony, one of 104 held nationwide for an estimated 8,000 new citizens.

“Our nation’s birthday is such a fitting and deeply patriotic day to become a new United States citizen,” said Darla Sidles, Saguaro National Park’s Superintendent. “What could possibly be more American than becoming an American on the Fourth of July? And what could be even more American than becoming an American in a National Park?”

The comment drew appreciative laughter from the audience of more than 100 family and friends gathered to support and applaud the new citizens, who came from Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Honduras, Iraq, Iran, South Korea, the United Kingdom, Hungary – and one other country.

“You might be surprised we have some candidates from Mexico,” said Judge Bowman.

The majority of new citizens were from Mexico, including one man who said he “worked for 20 years to be here. Thank you. Thank you.” Several new citizens took the microphone to express gratitude for citizenship, including a Belgian woman married to an American, who snapped picture after picture as their children watched and she talked. Others, like one man from Iran, waved miniature American flags as they stood to acknowledge their new citizenship status.

Judge Bowman urged them all to retain their cultures, food, and traditions from their home countries while also adopting some of the ways from their new country.

“Do not give up your cultures,” she said. “Continue to be yourself.”

Superintendent Sidles traced the importance of national parks not only for recreation and renewal but also for their “collective expression of our experiences as a country.” As examples, she pointed to Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Gettysburg, the Women’s National Historic Park, Ellis Island, and the Viet Nam Memorial – all now part of the park system and important sites in United States history.

The National Park Service and USCIS have a formal partnership enhancing citizenship ceremonies by holding them in national parks throughout the country. The agreement helps introduce new citizens to some of the nation’s most significant natural resources and cultural heritage sites. These historic and picturesque sites provide an ideal backdrop for citizenship ceremonies, where new citizens can learn about and reflect on American identity and the responsibilities of citizenship.

Saguaro National Park is planning to make July 4th Naturalization Ceremonies an annual park tradition with the support and cooperation of USCIS.

-NPS-